

L.A. 'Press' Sued Over Data On Drug Agents

From News Dispatches

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 12—A story in the Los Angeles Free Press titled "Know Your Neighborhood Narc" has forced a "majority" of the 80 names state narcotic agents to move from their homes and resulted in two lawsuits asking a total of \$25 million in damages against the anti-establishment tabloid.

Last Friday, The Free Press listed the names, addresses and phone numbers of 80 agents in Los Angeles, Santa Anna, San Francisco and San Diego.

Thomas C. Lynch, state at the story jeopardized the lives of the agents and their families. He filed suit Monday asking for \$10 million in damages.

Earlier, one of the agents

named in the story sued the Free Press for \$15 million in damages.

The state also won a temporary restraining order barring the paper from publishing confidential information from the files of the state Department of Justice.

Mathew O'Connor, head of the Northern California Division of the Narcotics Bureau, charged that "threats and harassment" have been directed against the 21 agents in the San Francisco office.

He said a majority of the identified agents have moved in with relatives or into hotels. O'Connor said the moves "will almost have to be permanent."

One of the agents identified in the story said his colleagues received profane telephone calls almost immediately after publication of the list.

He said most of the agents were worried that the list may lead "some nut to come by at 2 a.m. and throw a Molotov cocktail" at their homes.

"I can't see how anyone can be so irresponsible as to print those addresses and phone numbers," O'Connor said. "You mix an unstable personality with drugs and a weapon and there can be some serious problems."

Free Press managing editor Jack Burgess defended the article. "I feel that the responsibility for the families of the narcotics agents, and for that matter policemen in general, lies with that agent," he explained. "I don't assume responsibility for their families."

The tabloid had published a front-page statement giving reasons for publishing the list. The final paragraph said, in

part:

"There should be no secret police! In this spirit we are publishing . . . the office personnel roster of agents in the California State Bureau of Narcotics for the cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Ana and San Diego . . ."

How the paper obtained the confidential list is not known. Charles O'Brien, assistant state attorney general, said the list was probably stolen. "An internal investigation is under way and we have a suspect at present," he said.

A hearing on the restraining order will be held Aug. 25 in Los Angeles Superior Court.